My Brothers and Sisters in Christ, let us pray. Lord God of our Eastertide Hearts, Minds, Spirits, and Souls, may the words of my mouth and the meditation of all of our hearts always be acceptable in your sight, our strength and our redeemer, Amen.

Mother’s Day is that special day that comes around once a year when our attention rightly focuses on our moms. According to the Oxford Dictionary, a mother is “a woman who has borne a child.” Really? That’s it? Being a mother isn’t simply a matter of having children. To think that is just as absurd as believing that having a piano makes one a pianist. It is not surprising the secular world falls short of understanding what a mother is, or for that matter what a father is, because motherhood was God’s idea. God knows what makes a good mother, and one such good mother is recorded in the Old Testament. Her name was Hannah.

Most of you know I like art; I enjoy a good painting, and I took a vacation a couple of weeks ago to see some really good early Renaissance paintings. I don’t know anything about the technical aspects of art. But in spite of my ignorance, I still like looking at a good painting. I love knowing or imagining the story in the painting or the author’s story behind it, that is, what prompted the artist to paint the picture. The images in a painting, as we consider them, start to move us toward a narrative and entering into not only the drama of the setting, but what has happened in the time and space before the image of the panting, and foreshadowing what might happen in the future.

So today, I would like to paint a picture of how a godly mother looks, basing my theme on the story of Hannah in 1 Samuel 1. Beforehand, I need to prepare the canvas by laying out a foundational question. Are mothers important? What do we think? (take all answers).

There is the obvious point that without mothers none of us would be here today; this is the procreation bit that our English dictionary covers. But more than that, we can all agree our characters have been indelibly marked and impacted by our mothers.

Mothers play a very significant role in a person’s development. They are game changers one way or another. In this story, Samuel had a godly mother. What about you? If we had a godly mother then we should be very thankful today. Yet for some, remembering our mother brings pain and sadness. For us, this day may be a day to start the process of healing, reconciliation and forgiveness.

Mothers play a primary role in molding and shaping the lives of countless people. Yet it seems in this day and age motherhood is considered to be something passé. We still talk about “being on the mommy-track” and frame that in terms of lost earnings and prestige; is being a mother is to be less important than a career or finding out who you are?

Hollywood often portrays motherhood and children as simply get in the way of a woman living her life. However, motherhood is something God created and saw as good. So the first point we should acknowledge is that mothers are important. To be a mother is a very good thing.

So what made Hannah a great mother? What can we learn about godly motherhood from her? A couple of things come to my mind.

First, Mothers Matter When They Are Committed to God and Prayer

In our painting, our story, Hannah was bereft grief. And yet, our text says, she was committed to God and prayer. Her heartfelt pain was that she had no children. On top of this, she had to endure the daily taunting of Peninnah mocking her barenness, and even Eli questioned her sanity. Yet she continued to pray earnestly, trusting and persevering in God. God heard this mother with an humble and contrite heart and who could turn to no one but the Lord.

Next, Mothers Matter When They Commit Their Children to the Lord

We live in a world of entitlement and self-determinism. We believe it is our right to possess and determine how something or someone is used. This is a far cry from the biblical position of seeing all things as gifts to us from God and that we are to submit to God’s will in how we live and how we determine how something is used or how others are to live their lives.

Hannah understood this. She recognized Samuel was not hers but belonged to God. The Lord’s will for Samuel took precedence over her own desires for her child. This was hard for her. She would miss out on play dates by the Jordan River, “Hide-and-Seek” in the hills of Samaria, goodnight cuddles. Regardless, she wanted Samuel to belong to the Lord more than to herself. She preferred the pleasure of knowing her son had followed the Lord.

In today’s world, helicopter parents too often have their minds made up about what their children will or will not do. It takes great trust to believe God has the very best interests in mind for our children. Hannah understood this and put the full weight of her heart onto God.

Third, Mothers Matter When Their Love Is Sacrificial

Hannah exemplifies the teaching of Jesus. She was willing to lose her life for the sake of God. She was willing to lay down her life for her son. Hannah was willing to give up everything to have a child, but not her will be done; God’s will be done. She demonstrates laying down her life for another, just as Jesus said is the greatest love. A mother’s love is deepest and most fierce with her children.

David Lloyd George is remembered as one of the greatest prime ministers of Great Britain (1916-22). Our grandmothers know this story, but we don’t. When he was an infant in Northern England, his mother got caught in a blinding blizzard. Lost and freezing, she huddled beneath a tree for a modicum of shelter, removing her coat and wrapping it around young David. The next day, she was found dead, but the child was still alive. Fierce love.

Fourth, Mothers Matter Because They Bless Our Lives

Some of us are mothers with an empty nest, and your children have started their own families. You are still their mother, but how does it look to be their mother at this stage of their lives? Maybe the key is blessing. There are so many ways in which you can bless your children, and most of them have nothing to do with money or inheritances. How about a word of encouragement? Try a brief phone call, write a quick email, a notecard, or post a message on their Facebook page simply to say, “I love you, and I’m praying for you”—then actually pray for them! This will go a long way.

Bless your children and your children’s children. Today is a time to bless your children and encourage them in the hard stuff of life. The best lessons they can learn from you are resilience in the face of difficulty, and reaching out in love when they need it. With age comes wisdom. Don’t hold it back! Share it in a loving manner. By the way, this does not apply only to your own children. If you know someone who has no mom, then bless them.

I’ll leave you with this final thought: Mothers Matter, and We Should Honor Them.

For many of us, our mothers are getting older, and we are now becoming more and more responsible to take care of them. This is normal and is part of life. They have given much, and now they are to receive much. So, the cycle continues. So how do we remain a daughter or son to our mother when she is older?

How about remembering the 5th commandment, “Honor your mother so that you may live long in the land.” There’s no time limit or expiration date. It is for life. Jesus said those who humble themselves will be exalted, and those who exalt themselves will be humbled. It remains our task to humble ourselves before our parents. Serve them. Be patient with them. It takes them more time to do things than before, so let’s be gracious to them by empowering them to do things for themselves and others. But for God’s grace go I, right?

Our parents are at a stage in life when they need purpose and we don’t always understand that. Mothers never stop being mothers. It is in their DNA to love and serve just as it is in their Lord’s. Their role has changed, but their desire has not.

Do mothers matter? I think the answer to this question is summed up in the ancient Jewish proverb, “God could not be everywhere, so He made mothers.” Happy Mother’s Day, Thanks be to God.